IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES

June 6, 2002, 10:00 a.m.-4 p.m.

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICES
PORTLAND, OREGON

I. Greetings, Introductions and Review of the Agenda.

The June 6, 2002 meeting of the Implementation Team, held at the National Marine Fisheries Service's offices in Portland, Oregon, was chaired by Jim Ruff of NMFS and facilitated by John Palensky. The meeting agenda and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov.

Palensky welcomed everyone to the meeting, led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda.

2. Updates.

A. In-Season Management (TMT). **Cathy Hlebechuk reported that there have been three TMT meetings since the last IT meeting; the main question at those meetings has been, when will the freshet begin? We were doing everything we could do, operationally, to keep flows up, she said, but meanwhile, the weather stayed stubbornly cool and dry. Then all at once, a little over a week ago, the weather warmed and the freshet started. Hlebechuk said day-average flows at McNary have been in the 318 Kcfs range over the past week, well in excess of the BiOp flow target of 246 Kcfs. Flows at Lower Granite have averaged 128 Kcfs over the same period.**

Hlebechuk said there have been two SORs submitted recently, both focused on meeting flow objectives; we had agreed to draft Grand Coulee below 1240 feet if necessary to meet the McNary flow target, she said, but fortunately, that did not prove to be necessary. The current elevation at Grand Coulee is 1270 feet. At Libby, the current elevation is 2422 feet; the project is releasing 18 Kcfs, with inflows in the 50 Kcfs range. At Dworshak, outflow has been on minimum since May 26; the project is at elevation 1570, with inflows of about 34 Kcfs. Dworshak has filled 27 feet in two weeks. Albeni Falls is at elevation 2060.5 feet, two feet from full, and releasing 91 Kcfs, on free-flow, essentially. The flood stage below Albeni Falls is 100 Kcfs, and based on our current forecast information, we will not exceed flood stage, Hlebechuk said.

This year exemplifies the importance of shape and timing, in addition to volume, in runoff and flood control, Hlebechuk said. 2002 was forecast to be a normal year, in terms of runoff volume, and then all of a sudden, something happened, and we have a lot more water than everyone was expecting, she said.

Jim Fodrea said Hungry Horse is at 3537 feet, 23 feet from full and filling rapidly. This is the first year we've used VARQ flood control at Hungry Horse, he said, and it is working as expected. We're releasing full powerhouse capacity from that project, up to flood stage at Columbia Falls, in an effort to avoid having to spill if the project fills too quickly. There is some possibility that Grand Coulee may have to spill later, due to lack of load. Fodrea added that it now appears that Reclamation will be able to provide only 300 KAF of Upper Snake flow augmentation this year, due to the fact that many of the Upper Snake projects are not expected to refill in 2002.

B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). **See Agenda Item VIII, below.**

C. Water Quality Team (WQT). **Mark Schneider said the system is currently in an involuntary spill mode, with the operating agencies attempting to keep systemwide total dissolved gas levels below 125%. He distributed two handouts, the first a report on RPA action item #143, which calls for the development of a model of Snake River water temperature effects from various operational alternatives. We formed a WQT subgroup to focus in-depth on this RPA, he said; we developed a series of questions, some straightforward, some more complex, which need to be answered by the model. He added that the subgroup is evaluating both what modeling tools currently exist, what data are needed to support these tools and what data are being gathered this year.**

Schneider said the next step in this process will be for the RPA 143 subgroup to develop an interim report to the WQT, the IT, and the region, covering the results from the subgroup's question matrix, a summary of the available historical water quality data, a summary of the 2002 water quality monitoring program, the subgroup's recommendations and conclusions, a summary of available and planned modeling tools, and a work plan and schedule for the completion of the subgroup's tasks. Schneider noted that, at its next

meeting on June 12, the subgroup will be developing a schedule for the completion of the interim report.

D. System Configuration Team (SCT). **No SCT update was presented at today=s meeting.**

E. TMDL Update**. Mary Lou Soscia said the Lower Columbia gas TMDL is in its final stages now; EPA expects to receive that document for approval by early July. We=ve been coordinating with NMFS and USFWS on our ESA responsibilities for that approval, she said. On the water temperature TMDL, we=re in the process of finalizing our load allocations, something that should be completed in the next couple of weeks, said Soscia. We=re planning to have a draft temperature TMDL for the states and tribes by mid-August; we will then release a formal draft for public review this fall. The temperature TMDL will be finalized by the spring of 2003.**

With respect to the Lower Snake TDG TMDL, she continued, the state of Washington is doing that; it is expected to be pretty similar to the Lower Columbia gas TMDL. EPA is also leading the effort to develop the TDG TMDL for Lake Roosevelt, said Soscia; the Lower Snake, mid-Columbia and Lake Roosevelt TMDLs will also be completed in 2003. The next monthly TMDL development meeting is scheduled for June 27 in Boise; anyone interested is invited to attend.

3. BPA Dry-Year Strategy.

BPA=s Mary Johannis and Eric King led this presentation. Working from a series of overheads titled ADraft Dry Year Strategy: Principals and Tools@ (Enclosure E), Johannis explained that, based on the region=s experience in 2001, BPA is attempting to develop a more coordinated strategy to be implemented in future dry years in order to avoid the power system necessitated by the drought in 2001.

The main topic areas of Johannis= and King=s presentation included the following:

- **Why a dry-year strategy?**
- **What is a critically dry year?**
- **Dry-year principles B tools (load reductions, reliability enhancement, increased resources) and fisheries operations (mediation, other forum, implementation plan)**
- **Recap of what happened in 2001**
- **Closing the power gap**
- **The draft scope of the dry-year strategy**
- **Draft principles for the dry-year strategy**
- **Draft schedule (finalize dry year principles and tools by September 30, 2002)**
- **The draft communications plan**
- **The decision-making process BPA plans to use in this effort**

In response to a question, Johannis said the decision about when -- as well as which of -- these dry-year tools and principles would be implemented will be made in real time, and will depend on an array of market and meteorological factors. She added that BPA is willing to hold public meetings on the draft dry-year strategy if there is sufficient interest among the stakeholders in the region. In response to a question from Bruce Suzumoto, Johannis said at least some of the tools included in the dry-year strategy would likely be implementable in 2003, although others, such as a coordinated irrigation buy-back program, might not be ready to go until 2004.

Johannis asked anyone with additional questions or comments to contact her directly at 503/230-3047.

4. Northwest Power Planning Council Reliability Analysis.

Michael Schilmoeller of the Northwest Power Planning Council staff led this presentation, titled AReliability and Fish and Wildlife Operations.@ He, too, worked from a series of overheads. Among the highlights:

- $ **The Council is not anticipating any major reliability problems for at least the next several years**
- $ **The relevant BiOp language driving this analysis, and the Council=s interpretation of that language**
- $ **Critical times of the year for energy reliability**
- $ **What happened B summer and winter, 2001**
- $ **Predictions about the impacts of the water year on upcoming summer operations, made in March 2001**
- $ **Emergency actions taken B conservation, hydrosystem, reduced demand**
- $ **The Council=s loss of load probability analysis, December 2001-March 2002 (17.3%, more than triple the acceptable threshold of 5%)**
- $ **The March 2001 prediction for winter 2001**
- $ **Net result (no forced curtailments to customers, some level of reduction in fish survival, business shutdowns, layoffs, other effects)**
- $ **Council staff=s reassessment of loss of load probability, October 2001: what changed? (demand reduced dramatically, stored 2,200 MW-mo more than expected in Canadian storage last summer, other factors)**
- $ **Winter loss of load probability estimates, with revised loads and revised Canadian storage B 0.6% this year vs. 17% in May 2001**
- $ **Future projections: near-term: summer B no anticipated problems; winter, less than 5% loss-of-load probability (LOLP) through 2004. Long-term: summer B analysis being contemplated; winter B analysis now underway for 2005 and beyond**

In response to a question, Schilmoeller said Council staff anticipate that most of the

DSI load will be back on line by 2003. He added that BPA has done its own demand/supply analysis, and came to much the same conclusions as the Council staff. Johannis said BPA=s White Book paints a somewhat bleaker picture of the Northwest=s load and resource balance, but it is intended to reflect a worst-case scenario. In response to another question, Schilmoeller said the Council plans to release its draft Power Plan by the spring of 2003; he added that he is unsure, at this point, whether the Plan will specifically address the question of criteria for declaring power system emergencies.

Action: Schilmoeller said he will send copies of his overheads to Kathy Ceballos for inclusion with the minutes from today=s meeting.

5. Action Agencies 2001 Progress Report.

Jim Fodrea provided a brief overview of the action agencies= 2001 progress report, now available via the www.salmonrecovery.gov website. He noted that there has been some surprise expressed about the action agencies= view that the salmon recovery effort is on track, given the drought conditions that prevailed in 2001; he noted, however, that there were a number of important non-flow-related activities that got underway in 2001. Kim Fodrea observed that the overall system survival performance standards were met (or nearly so) in 2001 for Snake River spring chinook and steelhead, but Upper Columbia steelhead and spring chinook fared less well. Adult passage survival was also well in excess of the 10-year average, particularly for spring chinook, Jim Fodrea said.

Jim Fodrea continued on through the highlights of the 2001 progress report, touching on the following major topic areas:

- $ **A comparison of total system survival for Snake River spring/summer chinook and steelhead, and for Upper Columbia chinook and steelhead (2001 post-season modeled system survival estimate vs. the BiOp total system survival performance standard).**
- $ **Actual flows vs. 2001 BiOp target flows at McNary and Lower Granite Dams, and the impact of the ongoing power system emergency on flow augmentation in 2001 2001 juvenile spill comparison, 2001 actual vs. 2001 BiOp targets.**
- $ **2001 McNary outflow, 2001 actual vs. 2001 BiOp targets and 50-year average flows**

Jim Athearn noted that system configuration activities are proceeding as planned; he added that the action agencies have agreed to implement VARQ on an interim basis in 2003, anticipating the outcome of the full VARQ NEPA process which is expected to be completed in time to allow full VARQ implementation in 2004.

In response to a question, Jim Fodrea said that, although this is the action agencies= final report on 2001 activities, comments from the states, tribes, PUDs and the general

public are welcome. As you're aware, he said, the paperwork associated with BiOp implementation is ongoing, and any comments we receive can be taken into account in our future implementation planning processes. Tony Nigro asked about the report's emphasis on the positive in their 2001 progress report; Kim Fodrea replied that, given the disastrous water year, things could have been a lot worse. Fodrea reiterated that copies of the full 2001 progress report are available via the www.salmonrecovery.gov website.

Gary Sims observed that some of the tribes would like to have a detailed discussion of the action agencies' salmon recovery progress, and the specific actions taken to date, together with whether or not the BiOp performance standards are being met. Ruff replied that the tribes are always welcome and encouraged to participate in the Regional Forum process, adding that he would be willing to consider a separate meeting with the tribes on this topic.

6. Update on Status of NMFS Findings Letter.

Palensky said that, simultaneous with today's IT meeting, the action agencies are meeting with NMFS about the findings letter for the recently-submitted 2001 progress report. It's probably no secret that there are some issues regarding the progress report, most having to do with varying interpretations of what the BiOp intended, he said. Palensky said the timetable for the completion of the NMFS findings letter is the end of June. He added that there would be an opportunity for public comment once the findings report is completed. Tony Nigro commented that, in Oregon's view, it would be more useful if the non-federal parties could have an opportunity to comment before the findings report is finalized. Palensky noted that, given the short (45-day) turnaround time required of the NMFS findings letter under the BiOp, it will be difficult to allow for an intensive public comment period, but that he would pass along the comment to others at NMFS to see whether or not such an opportunity would be feasible. Palensky added that, by the July IT meeting, the findings letter should be ready for discussion.

7. Action Agencies' Status Report on 2003 Implementation Plan.

Jim Athearn said the 2003 implementation plan is in the early draft stage; our current schedule is to have a series of public meetings to present the draft plan to the states, tribes and others by late July, he said. That will give us time to revise the plan and meet our late-September target date for a final plan, Athearn said, adding that the public outreach process will be similar to that used last year in the development of the 2002 plan. Jim Fodrea added that any comments on the 2003 plan will likely be due by the end of August. If you have any questions, he said, feel free to call Jim Athearn or Kathy Fisher (of Bonneville) directly. So you're trying to get back to the schedule we anticipated in the BiOp? Ruff asked. Yes, Athearn replied.

8. ISAB Review of Giorgi Report (*Mainstem Passage Strategies in the Columbia River System; Transportation, Spill and Flow Augmentation*) and Future Assignments.

Chip McConnaha led this presentation, first distributing copies of the report itself as well as the ISAB=s review of that report (Enclosure G). He noted that the ISAB will be adopting a new charter at the next Council meeting; the new charter will bring in the tribes as the third equal member of the management board. Future appointments to the Board will be made by Don Sampson of CRITFC, Bob Lohn of NMFS, and Larry Cassidy of the Council, based on a pool of nominees developed by the National Research Council.

The ISAB has also been struggling with the topic of supplementation, a pretty slippery one to get your arms around, McConnaha continued. Right now they=re talking to supplementation practitioners in the basin, and the project is beginning to move. The Council has also asked the ISAB to do a general review and synthesis of tributary habitat restoration practices, he said.

Those are the two projects the ISAB is working on most actively at the moment, McConnaha said; in addition, the Council has also asked the ISAB to look at climate change and population, the 800-pound gorillas that are affecting our long-range planning. It will probably be at least six months before we tackle the climate change and population analyses, he said.

McConnaha then spent a few minutes going through the contents of the ISAB=s review of the Giorgi report, which was commissioned in support of the Council=s rulemaking on mainstem passage. Giorgi=s report attracted a great deal of comment, both positive and negative, McConnaha said; that is why the Council asked the ISAB to review the report. In response to a question from Ruff, McConnaha said the ISAB review contains an appendix that responds to many of the comments received on the Giorgi report.

In general, said McConnaha, the ISAB thought Giorigi=s report was well done, although there were a few places where the Board felt Giorgi was a bit too conservative in his interpretation of the data. The most important part of the ISAB review is the set of conclusions beginning on Page 7, McConnaha said; he read briefly through them. He added that the Council asked some specific questions about the Giorgi report; McConnaha devoted a few minutes to the ISAB=s replies to those questions. Nigro made the point that, in characterizing Giorgi=s findings, it is important for the ISAB to make a distinction between Alack of evidence@ and Anot true.@ McConnaha agreed that this is a valid point.

In response to a question from Ruff, McConnaha said he will be presenting the ISAB=s review of the Giorgi report at this month=s Council meeting.

9. May IT Meeting Minutes.

No comments were provided on the minutes from the May IT meeting. Palensky asked that any additional comments be provided to him as soon as possible.

10. Next IT Meeting Date.

The next meeting of the Implementation Team (a conference call) was set for Thursday, July 11. It was agreed to hold the IT=s September or October meeting in Spokane, with a tour of Grand Coulee and Lake Roosevelt set for the day before the meeting. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.